

Comment.

As I see it the bottom line is that CW will always be a good mode of choice in many situations, since it requires much less power, bandwidth, less complicated (and less EXPENSIVE!) equipment, and will "punch through" QRM better than most other modes.

BUT...this statement can only be true if there are OPERATORS with the CAPABILITY to effectively communicate with CW.

I do not believe the digital modes or any form of voice communication can be as completely effective as CW for emergency portable operations.

The digital modes require relatively delicate and sophisticated equipment that takes certain expertise to set up and operate, plus they need a temperate and well supplied environment in order to operate efficiently. The equipment must not be too warm nor too cold, and to produce "hard copy" for third party written message traffic, some sort of printing capability must be provided with its attendant paper supply logistic considerations. Digital modes, and RTTY are ideally better suited for point-to-point established links in controlled operating environments with high traffic volumes.

The voice modes have their own shortcomings in the translation from the written word to spoken and back to written again. The English language is universal, but the fact remains that many words have common sounds but different spelling and meanings, and it also is a fact that poor radio propagation conditions, atmospheric noise, and noisy environments at the transmitting and receiving ends can cause considerable garbling and other transmission problems, which reduce the efficiency of voice radio communications for written record work.

The CW mode does not have most of these problems. As long as a competent operator has an operable transmitter/receiver, and can work a telegraph key and copy by ear onto paper, the written word can get through accurately and efficiently.

I suggest that in order to gain the full operating privileges of the highest class of Amateur license, EXTRA, a prospective applicant ought to have to demonstrate a reasonable competency level (including competency in handling written record third party message traffic) in the use of CW. At least enough to be able to effectively communicate with other operators in actual radio work.

A CW code test speed of at least 15 WPM should be reinstated, and Extra Class applicants should be required to not only make accurate copy on paper at this speed for a certain amount of text, but require demonstration of hand sending proficiency as well at or near the same speed.

(Note: ARRL W1AW bulletins are sent at 18 WPM...so there is no shortage of practice copy available!)

Present Extra class licensees that had not previously passed the old 20 WPM exam element, hold or have held a commercial Radiotelegraph certificate, should be given until their next renewal (this could be up to TEN YEARS!) to prepare for the code exam. Noncompliance would result in downgrading license class to Advanced.

This kind of CW test can be administered effectively by volunteer examiners with minimal equipment required. FCC need not be involved, except only to record certification.

Five WPM is useless to pass any volume of traffic. The five WPM CW requirement should be immediately dropped from all Amateur testing requirements. Those who wish to learn to use it effectively can then do so on their own.

The lower 25 KHz of a number of the amateur bands are reserved for Extra class operators. These are also "CW only" band segments. There ought to be a minimum CW proficiency level required for licensees to use these band segments. If folks don't want to learn and become proficient in one of the best international methods of communication, then they shouldn't get maximum operating privileges. The CW proficiency requirement should be attached only at the highest license class in the amateur service. Lower class licensees should have the opportunity and operating privileges to use the CW mode in the Non-Extra class band segments throughout the HF amateur band allocations. This way it will be up to the individual amateur whether to upgrade to maximum or not.

The CW requirements have been "dumbed down" so much by FCC, that the current generation of newer amateur operators has not had the incentive necessary to even approach becoming comfortable with the use of CW.

Retaining the 5 WPM requirement for entry level licensing has only had the effect of adding an additional hurdle to prospective amateurs, rather than giving them some real reason to study and attain enough proficiency with CW so that it becomes a useful and comfortable tool for communicating.

This needs to be changed.

It is not a question of CW being an "old fashioned, outdated" mode...it is a question of COMMUNICATIONS EFFECTIVENESS, especially in times of emergency when commercial facilities are disrupted or overloaded. -

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